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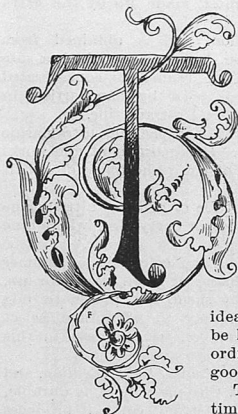
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



AMATEUR ART. PAINTING IN OIL COLORS.

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THE subject of color is one that demands very careful and exhaustive study. It has been said, that no man ever lived long enough to learn all that might be known of colors. If there is any approximation to the truth in this statement, it is possible for the amateur to acquire only the most superficial idea of them. Enough however may be learned to enable one gifted with ordinary intelligence to produce fairly good and artistic effects.

The Church has at all periods of time, been the recipient of the choicest productions of human genius and handiwork. Especially was this so in the early and middle ages, when priest-craft ruled the world, and state-craft was the merest tool in the grasp of fanatical and ambitious rulers, and when the crown was less than the confessional, and the sceptre dropped powerless at the sight of the crucifix. Thus it is that some of the choicest samples of the painter's art have come down to us through churches, chapels, and monastic retreats, many of which were pillaged in times of war, or robbed by unscrupulous banditti in times of comparative peace. To the efforts of the brothers Van Eyck, the art of painting undoubtedly owes much of its success in fine coloring, as it was through their labors, that the crude and oftentimes fugitive pigments with which some of the earlier pictures were painted, were worked out by slow and tedious processes, until by the latter part of the fifteenth century the fame of their work had spread all over Europe, and all artists of note were adopting their methods.

There has been much discussion as to the relative value of American and foreign colors. Some authorities insist that there is no such thing as American colors, and base their assertion upon the statement, that all of the materials from which the best colors are made are foreign products, and that the colors cannot therefore be American. There is a slight element of absurdity about such insistence, inasmuch as, although nearly all of the primary ingredients of an article may be imported, the produced result is considered as distinctly American. These colors are made from the same materials, and by processes quite as intelligent and painstaking as foreign products.

Conservative persons who insist on the superiority of foreign colors either forget, or are ignorant of the fact, that almost all special chemicals or colors are originally prepared by persons who have made such work a life study, and whose products are relied upon as the basis of various mixtures. Therefore because Ultramarine blue or Cremnitz white are foreign productions, it does not necessarily follow that no preparation into which these substances enter can be American. It is certainly past all controversy among the best artists, that there are at least two makes of American colors, that rank with the foremost brands of European manufacture. The impression that American goods are inferior, is fostered, either by those who are unwilling to admit even in the face of the most conclusive facts, that there is anything good which is the product of American enterprise and industry, or by parties interested in foreign manufactories.

In selecting canvas the beginner will find it an advantage to choose a rather fine, smooth surface, with ground of pale yellow or cream color. The canvas should not be too small, as in such a case the beginner will be likely to form a habit of smallness of detail, which is fatal to a broad and free style. A convenient size would be twelve by sixteen, or fourteen by eighteen inches. A very large canvas is undesirable for beginners, and it is apt to be awkward and unwieldy. Good canvas will merely crease in folding, and will not break or crack with any reasonable usage. There are several styles of canvas, varying in price according to the width and quality. Smooth goods of medium grade, costs from \$1 to \$1.50 per square yard.

Canvas already mounted upon stretchers may be bought at all first-class art stores, or the stretchers may be bought separately, and any amateur may put on the canvas. Of course, care must be taken to get it perfectly even, but aside from this, there is nothing difficult about the operation. The edges are fastened with small tacks, which should not be driven too deeply into the wood, as it is sometimes desirable to take paintings from the frames, and if too closely fastened, the canvas will be torn in removing them.

The easel should be strong, firmly built, and adjustable, as it is often desirable to change the angle, so as to avoid reflected lights, but the amateur to whom economy is an object, may use the A-shaped easel with the single support at the back.

Much has been said of the habit of classing black and white as colors, and many persons insist that they are the absence of all color. Eminent authorities have however declared that they are the extremes and comprehend all colors.

However this may be, they are indispensable to the artist, who finds in the one the means of diluting and lightening all tints or shades, and in the other an element that gives the necessary shadows and darkest tones. The two judiciously blended, produce admirable results in black and white, which is to some extent fashionable, and of which there are in our best collections some notable examples.

Brushes may be of ordinary bristles or of sable according to the nature of the work. Four or five medium sized bristle brushes, the same number of sable brushes, one or two of the very finest, the others of numbers three, four, or five, will be sufficient. A badger's hair blending brush is also required to blend the sky and large masses of color.

A palette of fine grained wood should be selected, and a small oil cup should be attached to one end. The amateur will do well to provide an ample apron with sleeves, as a paint brush in unexperienced hands has most astonishing possibilities in the way of daubing. The following are the colors most in demand for ordinary work. Special pains have been taken to select only, such as may be mixed without injury to each other.

Ivory black, is one of the best of all the blacks in use. It is obtained by burning ivory in closed retorts. It is very soft, and has a rich satiny lustre in shadows, and a brownish tinge in thin washes. It works with the greatest ease, and is one of the most valuable blacks in the color box.

Blue black is also a very useful color. It is made by burning branches of grape vines. It is not a strong color, but is very clear and soft. It is one of the best blacks to use with white lead, as it seems to have the quality of preserving this color, which in some atmospheres is likely to discolor.

Lamp black, as is well known, is produced by the smoke of resinous woods. It is very inexpensive in its crude state, being obtained in enormous quantities where tar and turpentine are manufactured. It is one form of almost pure carbon. It is intensely black, and one of the most durable of colors. It is not transparent, but covers very readily and dries rather slowly.

Bone black, cork black, paper black, and black lead are sometimes used, but the three blacks described, are quite sufficient for ordinary uses, and ivory black may be made to answer every purpose.

Zinc white is a pure oxide of zinc. It is a very desirable color, dries very slowly, and is in high repute among artists, although it lacks the body and lustre of white lead.

Silver white is very delicate and has less body than any other white in the color box. It is used to a limited extent for extremely delicate effects, but the amateur will do quite as well with either of the others mentioned. In addition to these, there are Chinese white and flake white. The former is, however, much more valuable as a water color than in oil.

Flake white is an oxidized carbonate of lead and is very much like Cremnitz white in general quality and use.

Yellow stands relatively next to white, and in its lightest tones, runs into white by gradual variations. Yellow and orange are warm colors, and are of great use to the amateur, whose natural tendencies are to cold blues and grays. Yellow should be used with the greatest care with moist blues, as they change color immediately upon contact and make green. There are a great number of yellow pigments, many of which are valuable, but not necessary, as a limited number of them will fill all requirements.

Naples yellow is a compound of oxide of lead and antimony. It takes its name from the city where it was originally manufactured. It is perfectly reliable, is opaque and a most excellent body color. It is considered one of the most desirable of yellows and may be had in five shades, varying from light to deep, and having a slightly rosy shade, and also one with a tinge of green. It should not be brought in contact with metal, but may be mixed either with brush or with an ivory spatula.

Aureoline is the most perfect yellow in existence. It is almost transparent in its palest tints, makes an excellent body when applied in larger quantities, and is especially brilliant and fresh in its effect. It is the nearest approach in color of any of the yellows to the yellow of the solar spectrum. It is a double nitrate of potassium and cobalt.

Cadmium yellow is a color that is in very general use. It is made in several shades, very light, which is a delicate lemon color, and deep orange, with two intermediate shades. Deep Cadmium is a valuable color, as it is a basis of many green and russet shades. Either Aureolin or Naples yellow are more desirable than the lighter shades of Cadmium.

Chrome yellow is one of the best known of all the yellows. It is less durable than many others, but has for some reason,

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found general favor among artists. There are five shades of Chrome yellow. They are less desirable for mixtures than many of the other yellows as they altogether destroy Antwerp and Prussian blue, when used to mix green shades.

Raw Sienna is another valuable color. It is transparent and changes but little either by the action of light or the atmosphere. It is a rather dull, warm color, and works admirably in landscape painting.

Burnt Sienna is raw Sienna calcined. By this operation it acquires a richer, darker color, and is an important and generally useful ingredient in landscape painting. It is a russet orange very rich and permanent, and is invaluable for middle tints and shadows.

Orange Vermillion is a sulphuret of mercury. It is clear, but somewhat dull in appearance, is perfectly durable, dries slowly, and has great depth of color.

Cadmium Orange is sulphate of Cadmium. It is magnificently brilliant and lustrous, and absolutely permanent, enduring exposure to light, air and dampness, without undergoing the slightest change.

Chrome Orange is a basic chromate of lead. It is a bright Orange, is very strong, durable, and brilliant. It is preferred by many artists to Chrome yellow, as it does not change color, and can be used by dilution, forming very many of the yellow tones.

Red has a very wide range of color, the tones and tints running into scores, all of which have their special uses, and are almost indispensable. Red gives a warm cheerful tone to a picture, and is without doubt the most attractive of all colors to the average eye. Good red colors are permanent, especially the madder reds, and even amateurs should endeavor to select only lasting pigments. It is often the case, that real genius is shown by persons who are quite untaught in the theory of colors, and their efforts are worth preserving.

Vermillion is a sulphide of mercury. It is a natural production, but is found in such small quantity that it is necessary to produce it artificially. American vermilion is considered the best, although, to satisfy the demand of certain conservatives, it is ordinarily called English or French Vermillion. It is a clear, bright red, is permanent, and does not change by exposure to light, or bad atmosphere. It is among the heaviest of colors, and should be thoroughly mixed, and never permitted to stand long before using. There are several vermillions shading to crimson and scarlet, but these, while useful, are not absolutely necessary to the amateur, as the addition of a very small amount of blue will produce crimson, and a little yellow gives the scarlet tone.

Madder is the basis of the best and most durable of red, rose and pink shades and tints. It works very easily, dries slowly, and seems to grow more beautiful with time.

Madder carmine is a truly superb color. With it, nearly every required shade, tint, and tone of red may be produced. It unites readily with yellow for scarlet, with blue for crimson, and with various brown shades and sienna for mahogany or rosewood.

Carmine is made from cochineal, and while brilliant and beautiful in color, it is somewhat fugitive.

Indian Lake is made from a vegetable resin, found on certain plants in India. It is much more durable than carmine, but less brilliant.

Light red and Mars red are ochre colors, and are destroyed by mixing certain antagonistic chemicals.

Indian red is especially valuable as a warm shadow color. It has a tendency to russet, with purplish shadows, and is specially valued for the pureness and transparency of their washes.

There are a score of red, rose, and pink shades on the dealers lists that are almost valueless for permanent work, and while real madder colors can be selected, it is a waste of time and money to use them.

Blue is a restful, quiet, and somewhat sober color, cooler as it deepens in shade, and when mixed to dark blue gray or steel colors is the coldest of tones.

Genuine Ultramarine is the most celebrated of all colors, as it is the most costly, and the most permanent. With the glowing madder cardinals, it has come down to us in many of the remarkable paintings of the old masters, which are of themselves the most wonderful of color studies. Ultramarine is transparent, and eminently durable, and has a very wide range of shades, all of them, from darkest to lightest, being most desirable. Ultramarine is made from the "lapis lazuli," a mineral substance found in China and Persia. Its principal ingredients are silica, alumina, sulphur, and soda. It is prepared by processes which entirely separate the various elements from the dross, the result being the deep rich blue, then paler shades, and finally a residuum of a delicate bluish gray, which is known as ultramarine ash. There are various artificial preparations of ultramarine, but they are in no sense equal to the genuine color, and should not be used in fine work. They are useful for large showy effects, or for scenery which is not of necessity permanent.

The trifling difference in cost, is almost made up by the extra strength of the genuine blue.

Indigo is a vegetable production, and is obtained from a plant by a process of fermentation, by means of which a substance called "indican" is set free. A refined or concentrated indigo is called *Intense blue* and is used by many artists in preference to any preparation of artificial ultramarine.

Cobalt blue is a pure delicate blue, approaching ultramarine in brilliancy, but is less transparent. It is permanent and works admirably. It is a calcined mixture of basic phosphate of cobalt and alumina.

Some artists claim that a single tube of genuine ultramarine is sufficient to produce the blue shades in every tint, where blue may be required.

Green is one of the most prominent colors in a summer landscape. While there are many shades of green, ready for use, there are artists who never employ them, but prefer to mix their own green shades. Amateurs, may to advantage, select several shades, not alone for convenience, but because in this way all antagonistic chemical elements are avoided.

Permanent green is made in three shades, light, medium, and dark. It is composed of cobalt and Chrome yellow, is durable, works very easily, although not a very strong color, it produces fine effects.

Oxide of Chromium is a deep, rather sombre, sage green, opaque and permanent. It works admirably with white, and is a very useful color for foliage.

Viridian is a very fine, deep, transparent green, with a bluish tinge.

Prussian green is made of Prussian blue and gamboge. This is also a blue green, and not unlike Viridian.

Ultramarine green is of a rich, blue, green color, is very delicate and transparent in light shades, and entirely permanent.

Brown as applied to color, has been made to include all shades, from wood color, to a shade approaching black.

The Umbers are two of the most valuable of browns.

Raw Umber is a natural earth, found near Cyprus, and is sometimes called Turkey Umber. It is of medium brown, not far from the color of browned or roasted coffee. It is semi-transparent and permanent, and works admirably.

Burnt Umber is simply calcined raw umber, and is of a much richer and darker color than the raw material. It works quite as well as the other, and is the basis of many of the finest brown shades.

Caledonian Brown is a superb orange russet, is fairly transparent, and very rich in its deeper shades.

Brown Madder is a most admirable color, and like all madders, is permanent and pure in tone, transparent, and very rich and intense. It is a clear dark russet, and whether in quantity or in very thin washes, it is equally reliable and effective.

Purple is made of a mixture of red and blue. There are only two purple colors that can be confidently commended. These are *purple madder*, and *Mars violet*. The former is a true madder color, and therefore permanent and reliable.

Mars violet is an oxide of iron. It is a very dark purple, and works with highly satisfactory results.

Grey is one of the important elements in a picture. It is ordinarily made as required, and are rarely put up ready for use. The most inexperienced amateur, can scarcely fail to mix good grey shades, as black and white, with blue, red or brown, will give the desired tone. It is of the utmost importance to the beginner in oil painting, to know what colors and materials are necessary, as by this means much of the expense of the outfit, which is often an item of great importance, can be avoided. It has often been said, that the principal cost of learning a new art is in the materials which are wasted, and they are very often wasted from lack of knowledge of what is absolutely required for the work.

The amateur who knows the few simple tube colors and implements required, and this should be one of the first lessons, and supplements this knowledge by becoming familiar with the mixing of tints and shades, has gone far on the way to success.

